

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 8, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to urge you to authorize the full suite of Individual Assistance Programs requested by Governor Jay Inslee in his March 20, 2020 appeal for a declaration of a major disaster for the State of Washington. Specifically, we urge you to approve his request to operate the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) in Washington State to unlock this critical form of assistance as soon as possible.

On January 20, 2020, the first domestic case of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) was reported in Washington State. Since then, 8,682 of our constituents have tested positive for the disease, of which 394 have resulted in fatality as of April 6, 2020. These numbers are anticipated to grow as the disease spreads rapidly in the coming weeks.

The early mitigation measures our state has taken to stem the spread of COVID-19 have led to a dramatic uptick in the need for food assistance programs stemming from increased unemployment in low-income communities. In the week ending March 21, Washington's Department of Employment Security saw an 843 percent increase week over week in new claims. These claims represent five times those filed during the peak week of the 2008 recession – a volume and velocity of claims unseen in the history of the unemployment insurance program going back to the 1930s. That week was further surpassed by the week ending on March 28 which recorded a 41 percent increase in new claims.<sup>1</sup> With unemployment claims being filed at unprecedented rates, demand for critical food assistance is expected to climb dramatically.

The Disaster SNAP program has been deemed effective in quickly delivering nutrition assistance to people recovering from past disasters.<sup>2</sup> If approved for Washington State, it would extend benefits to many households which would not ordinarily be eligible for SNAP but have suddenly

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<sup>1</sup>

[https://public.tableau.com/profile/jeff.robinson?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery#!/vizhome/InitialClaimsapplicationsforUnemploymentInsurance-WA\\_ETAS39-/Story1](https://public.tableau.com/profile/jeff.robinson?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery#!/vizhome/InitialClaimsapplicationsforUnemploymentInsurance-WA_ETAS39-/Story1)

<sup>2</sup> <https://frac.org/programs/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/disaster-snap-food-stamps>

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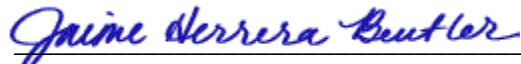
become in need of food assistance. Given that our state was one of the first in the country impacted by the COVID-19 emergency, this additional assistance is urgently needed.

We ask that you grant Governor Inslee's request for the full suite of Individual Assistance programs as soon as possible, including Disaster SNAP, to ensure food security for our constituents during the COVID-19 emergency. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



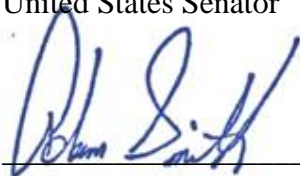
Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress



Patty Murray  
United States Senator



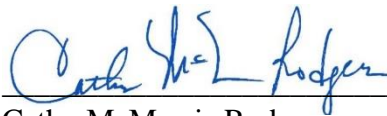
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



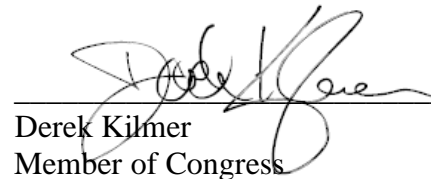
Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Member of Congress



Suzan DelBene  
Member of Congress

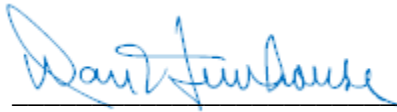


Denny Heck  
Member of Congress



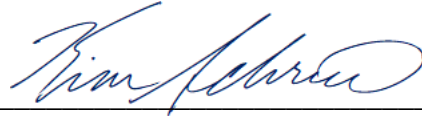
Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress

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Dan Newhouse  
Member of Congress



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Kim Schrier, M.D.  
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Peter T. Gaynor, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "M. R.", located on the left side of the page.